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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001150

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: BASHIR IN DARFUR: UNITY, STABILITY, DEVELOPMENT,  
RETURN

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) President Bashir and members of the Sudanese cabinet made an unprecedented trip to Darfur July 21-23 in an attempt to portray the region as stable, emphasize the unity of the Sudanese people, underscore the need for development, and call for the return of the internally displaced to their villages. Bashir's visit to the three Darfur state capitals was his first since 2004 and only the third time that a cabinet meeting has been convened outside of Khartoum. His public remarks were somewhat contradictory: While characterizing Darfur as "stable," Bashir nonetheless unveiled a "Triple Plan" for peace that implicitly acknowledged otherwise: increasing security, continuing negotiations with the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories, and supporting the return of IDPs to their homes. He castigated the international community for sowing tension in Darfur and challenged the West to compare Darfur's relative security with that of Iraq. Senior Assistant to the President and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) leader Minni Minawi, who accompanied Bashir, did not participate in the public events because of objections to Bashir's message, according to SLM insiders.

12. (C) Domestically, the trip represents the National Congress Party's (NCP) opening salvo in its 2009 election campaign. Local NCP officials orchestrated mass rallies throughout Darfur as a symbol of the NCP's continued strength in the region, superficial as it may be. (Footage on Al Jazeera of the rallies showed a heavy military presence and somewhat skimpy if enthusiastic rent-a-crowds.) Internationally, the visit was the regime's attempt to undermine the *raison d'etre* of a UN/AU peace-keeping force. The following represents a synopsis of Bashir's public remarks throughout this trip.

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Stability  
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13. (SBU) In all three state capitals, Bashir emphasized the increased stability in Darfur in contrast to other Arab and Islamic countries facing insecurity.

-- El Fasher: "We are visiting the three Darfur states and held the cabinet meeting in El Fasher to prove to the world that the situation is stable in Darfur and to challenge the American, British, and French Presidents if they could visit and talk to their people outside the Green Zone in Iraq as I am doing in Darfur now. Darfur has passed through a difficult time but now peace is here."

-- El Geneina "If one talks of lack of security, then it is not in Darfur. What they are talking about is Iraq, Palestine, or Afghanistan, and I challenge them all to come here."

-- Nyala: "Yes, Darfur passed through hard times, and you folks have suffered. But now there is peace, thank God. We know there are many people who are enemies of Sudan and don't want peace to come to Sudan. We won't rest until Darfur regains its previous status as a land of peace and security."

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Unity  
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14. (SBU) Bashir down-played the ethnic divisions in Darfur and called on Darfuris to rally toward unity.

-- Nyala: "There is no Arab or black. This is sedition. We don't want tribalism or regionalism. We are all still Sudanese, and we want a united Sudan. Dividing Darfur into Arab and black is sedition and conspiracy. Don't respond to it. We want you to unite and never allow a foreigner or traitor to divide you again. We want you united for the sake of development and reconstruction." Nyala

-- El Fasher: "We say 'no' to tribalism and 'no' to regionalism. All of us are Sudanese."

-- El Geneina: "All of us are Muslims. All people here are praying toward the same direction. We believe in one God, follow one book and one prophet, so nobody can divide us again. We want to be as we used to be before, beloved brothers, coexisting. We appeal to all our brothers now carrying arms to come and join the peace process."

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Development  
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15. (SBU) While announcing the launch of development projects in South Darfur, including a railway line to Nyala, Bashir called for an improvement of infrastructure throughout the region to discredit foreign claims of continued instability.

-- El Fasher: "This development (in Darfur) is a clear sign to the enemies of the Sudan and (shows) the distortions that the media creates about Darfur. We have come to assert our commitment to development, and peace is part of that."

-- Nyala: "I have come to open some development projects. What I have seen in Nyala in the hospital and the medical laboratory, I haven't seen anything like it in all of Sudan. If you stop those who seek to intervene in Darfur, we will build more hospitals, more schools, and more development projects."

-- El Geneina: "We are in the post-peace era and are now entering the stage of development."

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Return  
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16. (SBU) Bashir delivered a mixed message on IDPs: He pressed for their return to their homes while making this return contingent on an increase in security. Though the delegation did not visit an IDP camp, local NCP representatives brought 1200 IDPs from the Abu Shook camp to a rally in El Fasher to declare their readiness to return voluntarily to their homes.

-- El Geneina: "There are certain circles which are making exhibitions and museums of our displaced people, and anybody who wants to collect some money to live on comes here and

photographs our people in the IDP camps, so all of us have to exert effort to be out of these camps. We will not return people by force. We want them to return voluntarily and after we secure the areas they are going to return to and provide all the necessities that might help them to begin their new lives."

-- El Fasher: "We want to see the IDP camps empty to halt the trading in our people."

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Comment  
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17. (C) President Bashir's public rhetoric of ethnic and religious unity in Darfur, despite the usual anti-Western bluster, is a welcome change from the divisive and ultimately deadly discourse of some in his regime only a few years ago. We have yet to encounter any Darfuri moved or convinced by this road show. End comment.  
FERNANDEZ